Study Online with Open Christian University and Earn a State-licensed Qualification from California, USA

Should Christians Bring their Disputes before Unbelievers?

Sixbert SANGWA • May 31, 2024

In recent times, the prevalence of conflicts among people, including Christians, has become alarmingly evident. These conflicts frequently escalate, leading to divorces and broken friendships, which is particularly troubling within the Christian community that is called to live by the law of love. Jesus warned that "*because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold*" (Matthew 24:12). This decline in love and increase in conflict is a significant sign of the times, reflecting the prophetic words of Jesus and underscoring the urgency of returning to God's prescribed methods for resolving disputes.

The Prophetic Context: Signs of the End Times

Jesus spoke of a time when love would grow cold due to the proliferation of wickedness (Matthew 24:12). Today, we see evidence of this all around us: moral decay, rampant sin, and a general disregard for God's commandments. These conditions align with the prophetic descriptions of the end times, suggesting that we are indeed living in the days Jesus spoke about.

The Decline of Love and Rise of Wickedness

The erosion of love among people, especially Christians, is a troubling phenomenon. Love is the foundational commandment of the Christian faith, as Jesus taught: "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*" (John 13:34). When love diminishes, conflicts increase, and the consequences are severe, particularly within the body of Christ.

Forsaking God's Way of Dispute Resolution

One of the key issues contributing to the escalation of conflicts among Christians is the abandonment of God's methods for resolving disputes. Jesus provided clear instructions on reconciliation in Matthew 18:15-20, emphasizing a process that begins with a private conversation and, if necessary, involves a few witnesses and the church. However, instead of following these biblical guidelines, many Christians rush to involve secular authorities, seeking resolutions based on worldly justice rather than divine principles.

The World's Influence on Conflict Resolution

The secular world encourages behaviors that often exacerbate conflicts rather than resolve them. Women are urged to take their husbands to court, children are advised to report their parents to the police, and people, in general, are directed to seek justice through public organs. This approach is contrary to biblical teachings and usually leads to greater strife and division within families and communities.

Biblical Guidance on Handling Disputes

The Bible provides comprehensive instructions for handling disputes among believers. In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus emphasized the importance of reconciliation, urging believers to resolve their differences before presenting their offerings to God. The Apostle Paul also addressed this issue, advising strongly against taking fellow believers to court. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Paul reprimands the Corinthians for bringing their disputes before unbelievers, pointing out that such actions undermine the witness of the Church and prevent others from coming to faith. Paul's admonition is clear: "*If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?*" (1 Corinthians 6:1). By taking conflicts to secular courts, Christians not only disobey biblical directives but also damage the reputation of the Church and hinder its mission.

Consequences of Ignoring God's Instructions

Ignoring God's prescribed methods for handling disputes leads to several negative outcomes. Conflicts escalate, families are torn apart, and the witness of the Church is compromised. Furthermore, the spread of ungodly behavior within the Church damages its integrity. Paul warned that those who engage in immoral behavior, such as sexual immorality, idolatry, theft, greed, drunkenness, verbal abuse, and swindling, will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). These sins are prevalent in today's society, even among professing Christians, indicating a departure from biblical principles and a need for repentance and return to God's ways.

Shouldn't Christians Return to God's Ways

In these prophesied end times, it is crucial for Christians to return to the teachings of Christ and the apostles. Reconciliation and forgiveness should be the hallmarks of our relationships, reflecting the love and grace we have received from God. We must strive to resolve conflicts within the Church, setting an example for the world to follow. By doing so, we honor God, strengthen our communities, and enhance our witness to a watching world.

As we navigate these challenging times, let us remember the words of Jesus: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"* (Matthew 5:9). May we seek to be peacemakers, resolving conflicts with love and wisdom, thus fulfilling our calling as followers of Christ. It is only through adherence to God's principles and a genuine effort to live out the law of love that we can hope to counter the tide of wickedness and fulfill our divine mandate in these last days. This can't be possible by our human efforts but by the help of the Holy Spirit!

Practical Steps for Conflict Resolution

1. **Private Reconciliation:** Start by addressing the issue privately with the individual involved, following Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18:15.
2. **Involve Witnesses:** If private efforts fail, involve one or two other believers to help mediate, as recommended in Matthew 18:16.
3. **Bring it to the Church:** If the conflict persists, bring the matter before the church community for further resolution (Matthew 18:17).
4. **Avoid Secular Courts:** Refrain from taking disputes to secular courts, as Paul advises in 1 Corinthians 6:1-6, to preserve the integrity and witness of the Church.
5. **Seek God's Wisdom:** Pray for guidance, wisdom, and a spirit of forgiveness, trusting that God will lead you to a peaceful resolution.

By following these steps and prioritizing God's methods over worldly solutions, Christians can navigate conflicts in a way that honors God and promotes unity within the body of Christ.

Related Articles

- Created for His Purpose?
- Are We Standing on the Brink of the Church Rapture?
- Are you called for full-time ministry in the marketplace?
- Are We Truly Meant to Achieve Anything We Want in Life?
- How Does Israel Play a Critical Role in the End Times Prophecy?
- What Does Coming Out of Babylon Mean and Why is it Critical Now?
- What Is the Mark of the Beast and How Do I Know If I Have It or Not?

Further Resources

- Explore Online Ministry Opportunities at Open Christian Ministries (USA)
- Explore Christian Business Services at the Center for Faith and Work (Rwanda)
- Pursue an Affordable Online Christian Degree at Open Christian University (USA)
- Kindly Share Your Question for Consideration in Future Articles. Click Here to Submit

← Back to blog

Comments (0)

Post Comment